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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000723

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DEPT FOR H, SCA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [OREP](#) [KG](#)
SUBJECT: CODEL FALOEMAVAEGA VISITS KYRGYZSTAN

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11. (SBU) Summary: U.S. Representative Eni Faleomavaega met numerous Kyrgyz officials during his June 29-July 2 visit to Kyrgyzstan. Chairman Faleomavaega expressed appreciation for Kyrgyzstan's decision to permit continued U.S. access to Manas airport facilities for the transit of personnel and cargo to Afghanistan. Deputy Foreign Minister Kalembeikova noted how the issue of Afghanistan "united" the United States and Kyrgyzstan. Chairman Faleomavaega discussed a new exchange program for Central Asian students to study at U.S. universities, and described the formation of a new "Central Asia Caucus" in the U.S. Congress. His Kyrgyz interlocutors welcomed his visit, and local media reported on Chairman Faleomavaega's meetings. End summary.

12. (SBU) During his June 29-July 2 visit to Kyrgyzstan, U.S. Representative Eni Faleomavaega (D-American Samoa) met officials from the Kyrgyz government and parliament, in addition to discussions with Kyrgyz students, the Embassy and Manas Air Base personnel. He also toured Manas Air Base. In his meetings with Kyrgyz representatives, Chairman Faleomavaega expressed his appreciation for Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's decision to agree on new arrangements for U.S. access to transit facilities at Manas International Airport for use in ferrying personnel and cargo to support multinational efforts in Afghanistan. Chairman Faleomavaega also stressed the significance of President Obama's election, and highlighted President Obama's speech in Cairo on relations with the Muslim world. Finally, Chairman Faleomavaega carried the message that the U.S., under President Obama's leadership, is withdrawing from Iraq and re-focusing its foreign policy and military efforts on pursuing terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan that continue to pose a threat to U.S. and Central Asian interests.

Finding Common Ground

13. (SBU) After noting her "satisfaction" with bilateral relations, Deputy Foreign Minister Baktygul Kalembeikova told Chairman Faleomavaega that the conflict in Afghanistan had further "united" the United States and Kyrgyzstan in fighting

the various "isms" that flow out of the Afghanistan/Pakistan region. Kalembekova stressed President Bakiyev's "Bishkek initiative" for discussions on Afghanistan-related issues. She highlighted Kyrgyzstan's own Afghanistan experience as a resource for joint efforts to reach a peaceful outcome in Afghanistan. Chairman Faleomavaega called on Kyrgyzstan to be more forceful in advocating its views, especially regarding what Kyrgyzstan can offer on Afghanistan. Kalembekova said Kyrgyzstan could export various food items and construction materials to Afghanistan, and complained about the export of Italian cement to Afghanistan. Chairman Faleomavaega also praised Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries for their solidarity in not supporting Russia's invasion of Georgia last year. Kalembekova expressed appreciation at meeting a member of the U.S. Congress who "values us." She also requested assistance in resolving ecological issues, including Soviet-era stockpiles of uranium tailings.

14. (SBU) Chairman Faleomavaega met with First Deputy Minister of Defense Colonel Kenjisariev to discuss military assistance and cooperation between the U.S. and Kyrgyzstan. Colonel Kenjisariev expressed appreciation for the military aid provided through the Office of Military Cooperation that helped build a non-commissioned officer academy, special forces facility, and a military hospital. Kenjisariev thanked the United States for helping to cultivate the Kyrgyz armed forces through training and education opportunities for officers and soldiers. Chairman Faleomavaega conveyed his hope to bolster education opportunities for Kyrgyz students by sponsoring a bill to increase exchange programs, noting that Kyrgyzstan could send young cadets to U.S. military academies. Chairman Faleomavaega was pleased to learn that

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four Kyrgyz students have graduated from U.S. military academies and one recent cadet just departed to study at West Point. Chairman Faleomavaega thanked Colonel Kenjisariev and the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense for playing a definitive role in securing continued access to Manas during the recent renegotiations.

15. (SBU) In his meeting with President Bakiyev's Foreign Policy Advisor Aibek Moldogazyev, Chairman Faleomavaega noted President Bakiyev's decision on Manas and stressed that shifting policy has required the U.S. to place a greater focus on Afghanistan. Moldogazyev agreed that the recent situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly in Pakistan's Swat Valley, forced his government to reconsider its decision in order to support Coalition efforts. Moldogazyev suggested that Kyrgyzstan stood ready to play an even greater role, raising President Bakiyev's Bishkek Initiative and suggesting that Kyrgyz companies should be awarded more contracts to assist in Afghan reconstruction efforts. Chairman Faleomavaega also noted his intent to hold oversight hearings on Central Asia in August or September and discussed the emerging Central Asian Congressional Caucus that Representative Faleomavaega will co-chair. They further discussed the possibilities of increasing ties, including scholarship opportunities in the United States for Kyrgyz students.

16. (SBU) During his discussions with the deputy ministers, parliamentarians, and students, Chairman Faleomavaega recounted a meeting two years ago with Kyrgyz Ambassador to the U.S. Zamira Sydykova and other Kyrgyz officials in which they lamented the low level of payments they received for hosting Manas Air Base. Faleomavaega recalled telling them that if they thought the payment was not sufficient, then they should get serious and "kick us out." He was surprised in February when the Kyrgyz heeded his advice, and he told his interlocutors that he frankly thought that given the \$900 billion the United States has spent in Iraq, we could easily afford another \$60 million in payments for the base.

Discussion at Parliament

¶17. (SBU) In a meeting with Kabay Karabekov, the Deputy Chair of the Jogorku Kenesh's Committee on International Affairs and Interparliamentary Cooperation, Chairman Faleomavaega noted the two countries' common interests in fighting extremists in Afghanistan, and thanked Parliament for its approval of the agreement to establish a transit center at Manas Airport. Karabekov replied that those interests were shared by all countries in Central Asia and in the former Soviet Union, and noted that recent special operations against alleged terrorists in southern Kyrgyzstan underline the importance of tackling extremism everywhere. Karabekov also said that Kyrgyzstan is trying to cooperate with Uzbekistan to prevent extremists from crossing regional borders, but that the relationship is "very complex," and much remains to be done. Chairman Faleomavaega described the proposed student exchange program, and repeated his points about the nascent Central Asia Caucus in the U.S. Congress.

Energy and Environmental Issues

¶18. (SBU) In his meeting with Ministry of Energy State Secretary Batyrkul Baetov, Chairman Faleomavaega emphasized opportunities for renewable energy and detailed the workings of small-scale wind turbine technology for the benefit of rural communities. Chairman Faleomavaega also suggested that U.S. experts visit Kyrgyzstan to aid in surveying areas for potential renewable power generation. Both sides discussed the legacies of uranium mining and nuclear testing in Central Asia, and Kyrgyz officials disclosed problems associated with uranium tailings sites throughout the country.

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American University of Central Asia

¶19. (SBU) Chairman Faleomavaega visited the American University of Central Asia and received a briefing on the school's history and current operations. He then met a group of about 15 students for an informal discussion on issues including Manas Air Base, President Obama and impressions of Kyrgyzstan. Chairman Faleomavaega noted Kyrgyzstan's contributions to the international effort to combat extremism.

Touring Manas

¶10. (SBU) After two days of meetings discussing Manas, Chairman Faleomavaega visited Manas Air Base, received a briefing and tour led by Base Commander Colonel Blaine Holt, and lunched with service members. On behalf of his Congressional colleagues, he thanked them and their families for their tremendous sacrifices, shared the outcome of his meetings with Kyrgyz officials, and his sense of the importance of their mission. Chairman Faleomavaega expressed that he was impressed by the efficiency of base operations and the excellent care they provide for transiting troops. He further explored the potential for greater cooperation with Kyrgyz firms and encouraged the Base leadership to assist them to develop the quality materials the base requires, and purchase more goods locally whenever possible.

News Coverage

¶11. (U) The Embassy issued a press statement regarding Chairman Faleomavaega's visit. Two leading media outlets, AkiPress and 24.kg, reported on Chairman Faleomavaega's visit.

¶12. (U) Chairman Faleomavaega cleared this cable.

LITZENBERGER